

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraph [022] with the following paragraph:

[022] A client terminal 110 sends the data request to the virtual network address of virtual address connection 121. Thus, from the standpoint of client terminals 110, each request is sent to a single server located at the virtual address. Each request, however, is actually sent to load balancer 122 for a determination of which of a number of server devices 124 will actually handle the request (step 220). In systems consistent with the present invention, load balancer 122 randomly assigns a particular server device to handle the request. Other methods for balancing the load amongst the bank of server devices 124 may also be used, however, such as cyclically selecting a server device according to a predetermined rotational order. Further, load balancer 122 may determine which server device 124 will handle a request based on the operational status of each server (e.g., the relative load of each server, whether a particular server is currently operational, etc.).